

Recycling Rule Revision: Changes for Responsible Units

The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) has revised the administrative code that oversees Responsible Units' (RUs) effective recycling programs and other aspects of Wisconsin's recycling law. The rule revisions took effect July 1, 2025.

This document summarizes changes specifically for RUs, to help RUs understand and comply with the changes. Please refer to [ch. NR 544, Wis. Adm. Code](#), for exact language. If you have questions about the changes, contact DNRRecycling@wisconsin.gov.

RU Education

Before the code revision, RUs were required to provide education to residents of single family and 2-to-4-unit residences, multi-family dwellings, and non-residential facilities and properties about recycling of materials specified in s. 287.07 (1m) to (4), Wis. Stats. This includes lead acid batteries; appliances; oil; yard waste; tires; cardboard and paper; and containers made of glass, steel/bi-metal, aluminum and plastics #1 and #2. The 2009 electronics recycling law also required RUs to provide education on electronics recycling.

These requirements remain with clarifications and additions as follows:

- RUs must review their educational materials for accuracy and distribute this information at least once a year.
- Educational materials must now also include the landfill ban on oil filters and absorbents, proper disposal and opportunities for recycling batteries, reasons and ways to reduce food waste, and composting opportunities and locations.
- RUs do NOT need to collect or create programs for recycling oil filters and absorbents or batteries, reducing food waste, or composting.
- Distribution of education and outreach materials by RUs may include online posting, electronic and printed mailings, and use of social media. Public outreach materials are available for use at no cost from the DNR. Visit the [DNR recycling education and outreach page](#) for resources.

Collection Requirements

Before the code revision, RUs (or municipalities within a multi-member RU) with a population of 5,000 or greater were required to provide, contract for, or otherwise provide for curbside recycling at least monthly, or to provide a drop-off used by at least 80% of the single-family and 2-to-4-unit residences in the municipality as documented by drop-off site monitoring records. RUs (or municipalities within a multi-member RU) with a population under 5,000 were required to provide

an adequately sized drop-off open at least 2 days/month for 5 hours/day (minimum total of 10 hours/month) or to provide a collection equivalent to the larger RUs/municipalities.

The code revision made the following changes to these requirements:

- If an RU provides only the minimum of monthly curbside collection, it must also provide access to a drop-off site for recyclables. Access could include a drop-off site in another municipality or at a private location.
- Any municipality that opts to direct individual residents to contract directly with a waste hauler for collection of recyclables to meet the requirements outlined for a collection system must modify its recycling ordinance and compliance assurance plan to reflect this requirement and collect recycling tonnage data.
- RUs are no longer required to meet a specified pounds per person collection standard.

Recycling Ordinance Modifications

Multi-Family Recycling

Before the code revision, in an RU's recycling ordinance, multi-family properties needed to provide "adequate, separate containers" for the recycling program established in compliance with the ordinance. No additional details were included to define "adequate," which led to RU challenges with enforcing their ordinance and confusion at some multi-family properties. The code revisions made the following clarifications to this requirement:

Providing adequate recycling services to multi-family properties must include an equal or greater ratio of recycling containers to trash containers and one of the following:

- minimum total volume of recycling containers provided is 20 gallons per week per dwelling unit;
- ratio of trash container volume to recycling container volume is at most 2:1; or
- an alternative method which does not result in recyclable container overflow between collection.

Non-Residential Recycling

Before the code revision, in an RU's recycling ordinance, non-residential properties needed to provide "adequate, separate containers" for the recycling program established in compliance with the ordinance. The DNR understood that non-residential properties vary significantly in recycling generation. For instance, the volume of recycling containers needed will be vastly different for a small shop, a 50-unit hotel or large manufacturing facility. Therefore, "adequate" could not be as specifically described as for multi-family residences.

To clarify what “adequate, separate containers” means for non-residential properties, the code revisions require that the total volume of recycling containers be sufficient to avoid overflow during the time period between collection of materials and delivery to a recycling facility.

Tenant Notification Requirements

The code revisions reduced tenant notification requirements for multi-family and non-residential facilities. Notification will no longer need to include reasons to reduce and recycle waste or specific details (hours of operation, contact person, address and phone number) for locations that accept recyclable materials not collected on-site.

All RUS will need to update their recycling ordinance to address these new requirements. The DNR will provide a new recycling ordinance template for RUs to use to update their recycling ordinance.

Changes for Haulers and Materials Recovery Facilities That Affect RUs

Haulers

The code revision makes the following changes for haulers of recyclable materials:

- Requires containers used for collection of recyclables to be clearly labeled.
- Requires haulers to provide residential recycling tonnage data to RUs by Feb. 1 each year. Data must include the name of the materials recovery facility(ies) (MRFs) used to process the materials.
- Requires haulers to notify RUs when a new MRF is used.

Materials Recovery Facilities

The code revision makes the following changes for MRFs that serve RUs:

- Requires MRFs provide contracted RUs with information on accepted materials.
- Requires MRFs to review educational material within 60 days of a request from a contracted RU.

The above are only code revisions that directly affect RUs. Haulers and MRFs have a number of other new requirements and changes in the code revision.



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The information above is a summary of changes for RUs as a result of recycling rule revision and is not comprehensive. To view the complete rule changes, go to

[Wisconsin Legislature: CR 23-065 Rule Text](#)